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ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

MACROECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS: TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Letter dated 21 May 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Venezuela to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Further to my letter of 14 May 1997 (A/51/899), we wish to ask that the reopening of the discussion of sub-item (c) of agenda item 94 in order to consider the draft resolution contained in annex II to that letter be postponed, in view of the contents of the two communications which I now have the honour to enclose and which we believe to be self-explanatory (see annexes I and II).

May I ask that the present letter and its enclosures be distributed as an official document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Ramón ESCOVAR-SALOM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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ANNEX I

Letter dated 20 May 1997 from the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States on the Economic and Social Council addressed to the Deputy Permanent Representative of Venezuela to the United Nations

I am writing to ask that you consider withdrawing your request for the reopening of the consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 94, "Macroeconomic policy questions", as outlined in your letter of 16 May 1997, at the 98th plenary meeting of the General Assembly at its resumed fifty-first session. While the United States recognizes your concerns regarding draft resolution A/50/L.71 as indicated in your letter, we do not believe a discussion of this item in the General Assembly at this time is appropriate because disagreement on the fundamental aspects of this issue still remains among States members of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

In the nearly two years since A/50/L.71 was submitted, solely in a desire by the members of the then Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Restrictive Business Practices to change the group's name to the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy, the ninth session of UNCTAD has been convened and its seminal document, "A Partnership for Growth and Development", has fundamentally restructured the agency's intergovernmental machinery. However, members' interpretations of this document remain varied and there is still disagreement among members on fundamental issues of whether the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Restrictive Business Practices continues to exist post-Midrand; whether, if it continues to exist, it remains associated in any way with UNCTAD; and whether, if it is associated with UNCTAD, it stands outside the landmark restructuring, reform and intergovernmental operations limits unanimously agreed upon by member State ministers at Midrand. It is clear these issues need to be resolved among States members of UNCTAD.

The United States therefore requests Venezuela to withdraw its request to reopen consideration of the draft resolution in the General Assembly until further consultations are undertaken by the States members of UNCTAD with a view to resolving these contentious issues.

(Signed) Seth WINNICK
Deputy US Representative
on the United Nations
Economic and Social Council

ANNEX II

Letter dated 21 May 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Venezuela to the United Nations addressed to the Permanent Representative of Zambia to the United Nations Office at Geneva and President of the Trade and Development Board

I have the honour to refer to your letter of 13 November 1996 by which you requested, on behalf of the membership of the Trade and Development Board, that we present again for consideration by the General Assembly a revised draft resolution relating to the outcome of the Third United Nations Conference to Review all Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices.

We proceeded to act on your request on 14 May 1997, by means of a letter to the President of the General Assembly asking that the corresponding item of the agenda be reopened in order for the Assembly to consider the draft resolution (see A/51/899). Yesterday, however, we received a communication from the representative of the United States of America on the Economic and Social Council asking that we withdraw the said request, indicating the view that a discussion of this item in the General Assembly at this time would not be appropriate because disagreement on the fundamental aspects of this issue still remains among UNCTAD member States. I enclose a copy of his letter for your reference.

As a consequence of the above, and because Venezuela, in its capacity as Chairman of the Review Conference, can only present a draft resolution that would be based on the consensus of the participating States, we shall ask the President of the General Assembly to postpone consideration of our request. We wish to refer the matter back to you now and, as indicated by the representative of the United States, suggest that further consultations be undertaken by the members of UNCTAD with a view to resolving the contentious issues and, we hope, arriving at an agreement.

As it will become increasingly difficult to bring this issue to the attention of the General Assembly before it concludes its resumed fifty-first session, we also suggest that you consider dealing with this matter in the next session of the Trade and Development Board and including it in your annual report to the Assembly. If you continue to deem it appropriate that the issue be dealt with directly by the General Assembly, another possible course of action would be for the draft resolution to be tabled by interested delegations at the fifty-second session, when the Second Committee will again take up the item entitled "Trade and development".

(Signed) Ramón ESCOVAR-SALOM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative